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present form is the work of a writer living long after the events themselves had transpired, there seems to be clear evidence of the historical truth of the Book.

There still remain five lines of evidence which deserve attention : (1) Jonah's refusal to obey the divine call ; (2) his chagrin at the success of his own mission ; (3) the relation of the Hymn of Thanksgiving (chap. III.) to the Book ; (4) the general lack of unification characteristic of the Book, and its abrupt close ; (5) the standpoint of the writer of the Book. These will be taken up in a *fourth* paper.

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## DID EZRA WRITE OR AMEND ANY PORTION OF THE PENTATEUCH ?

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It has become so common with a recent school of critics to attribute the authorship of an important portion of the Pentateuch to Ezra, and the opinion is affirmed with such emphasis and assurance, that a demand is made upon scholars to inquire whether these things are so. There is but one source of evidence on this subject to which an appeal can be made, and by whose evidence all inquirers must abide. This source is the accounts which we have in writings contemporaneous with him of what Ezra did as priest and ruler in Jerusalem, after the return from the captivity. I say "contemporaneous" with him, for traditions which were not written till five centuries afterward are utterly worthless in deciding such a question as this.

Is there, then, any *authentic historical evidence* that Ezra composed a single new law, or remodelled an old one ? This question answered, the relation of Ezra to the so-called law of Moses, or the Pentateuch as we have it to-day, is settled. Settled, I say, unless men will forsake historic proof for baseless guesses and vague tradition. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain all the history that is at all reliable of the time, the character, and the work of Ezra. The extant Jewish literature between the time of Ezra and the Christian era, more than four centuries, says not a word of Ezra, or of his having anything to do with the law as editor of the old document, much less of his being the author of any part of it. The worthies and authors of note of the Hebrews are mentioned by the author of Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, a work written about two centuries after the time of Ezra ; but Ezra's name is not mentioned, though Zerubbabel's and

Joshua's and Nehemiah's are, and their good works are named. If Ezra at this early day had been reputed the author or even the reviser of the "law," would his name have been omitted? Most surely not. The tradition is of much later origin. The later Jewish traditions are most of them as incredible as they are silly. The stories in the Talmud about Ezra are too foolish to justify quotation, much less belief. The earliest recorded tradition is found in 2 Esdras xiv., 19-48. This book was written about the Christian era, not later than a century after, probably. This tradition is the least extravagant of any that have come down to us, and may be quoted as giving the soberest guess of the time, respecting the work that Ezra did in the construction of the law. It is substantially as follows: As Ezra sat under an oak in the field, there came a voice out of a bush over against him, and said, "Esdras! Esdras!" and he said, "Here am I, Lord." Then he said unto me, "I did reveal myself unto Moses in the bush, and talked with him and brought him to Mount Sinai, and told him many wondrous things; and *these words shalt thou declare.*" Then I answered and said, "Behold, Lord, I will go as thou hast commanded me." "The world is set in darkness, for *thy law is burnt* . . . But, if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, *which was written in the law*, that men may find thy path, and that they which live in the latter days may live." And he answered me, saying, "Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them that they seek thee not for forty days. But look thou, and prepare thee many tables of the box-tree, and take with thee five scribes which are ready to write swiftly; and I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out till the things be performed which thou shalt begin to write; and, when thou hast done, some things thou shalt publish, and others thou shalt show secretly to the wise. Begin to write to-morrow." And he gathered the people, and said, "Let no man come unto me now, nor seek after me these forty days." So he took five men, and went into the field and remained there; and the next day a voice called me, saying, "Open thy mouth, and drink that I give thee to drink." Then I opened my mouth, and he reached me a full cup like water; but the color was like fire. And I took it and drank, and my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my spirit *strengthened my memory*; and my mouth was opened, and shut no more; and the five men wrote the wonderful visions of the night that were told. In forty days, they wrote two hundred and four books. And, when the forty days were fulfilled, the

Highest spake, saying, "The first that thou hast written publish openly, all may read it ; but the seventy last, only the wise may read." And I did so.

Bizarre as the whole account is, and unintelligible as most of it is, two things are clear. The old Mosaic Law was lost by burning : it was restored, recovered by the miraculous influence of the cup of which he drank upon his memory, whereby he recalled it all, and dictated it to these five writers. These two points in the confused tradition as here recorded seem clear. Ezra dictated no new law : he recited the old law which was burned, and the five scribes wrote it down. This tradition does not therefore show that the Pentateuch was the work of Ezra, either in whole or in part, but that Ezra wrote it out from memory, a conjectured way of accounting for its preservation from the wrecks of the captivity. At this period, tradition did not attribute the authorship of the law to Ezra, but only its engrossment from memory ; and, to render it credible that his memory could recall it all, he is said to have drunk of a miraculous cup from the hand of the Lord. That the "law" here spoken of was not a fragment of the Mosaic code enacted at Mount Sinai, but our whole Pentateuch, is evident from Ezra's declaring that he "would write all that *hath been done in the world since the beginning*, which are written in thy law." Genesis is well described in this clause. In a word, this earliest tradition of the relation of Ezra to the Mosaic Law, or Pentateuch, is that it was miraculously recalled to his mind, and written down, word for word, as he repeated it, during forty days. There is not a hint that he added anything to the original document, or changed anything in it. The only reasonable conclusion is, therefore, that the scribes, the Jewish scholars in the neighborhood of the Christian era, believed in the existence of the Pentateuch *before* the time of Ezra, and attributed to him its rescue from oblivion by a miraculous quickening of his memory. It is much more credible that the law was composed in the Mosaic age than that it was restored by such an agency.

The next account of Ezra's relation to the law is found five hundred years earlier in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Without discussing the authenticity, genuineness, or age of these books, let it be assumed that they were composed in the period to which they relate, and that the accounts which they contain are substantially correct. What do we find in these books respecting the doings of Ezra ? About eighty years after Zerubbabel led his colony back to Judea, and about sixty years after the new temple was built and dedicated, and during which period they had worshipped, "as it is *written in the law of Moses*, the

man of God," or "as it is written in the *book* of Moses," Ezra appears with an additional colony. He is described as a ready scribe in the *law of Moses*, which the Lord God of Israel had given. Unquestionably, this is the same law as had been observed by the colony under Zerubbabel, and which directed the worship in the new temple,—the special services of the priests and Levites, the kind and quality and time of offering of sacrifices, the feasts, and the manner of their observance. And we read that "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments," or, as it may be rendered, "law and right." This was the business of a scribe,—to apply himself to a study of the law (and this is the meaning of the original text in this place), and to instruct the people in it. This, it seems, "Ezra had prepared his heart" for, and resolved to do. Nothing is said or hinted here of his having "prepared his heart" to give a new code of laws to the colonists, or to add anything to the old code, but simply to expound to them the law of Moses, then in their hands.

This same Ezra appears to have been authorized by the Persian king, Artaxerxes, to act, to some extent at least, as governor of the colony at Jerusalem. And he is directed "to judge all such as know the laws of thy God," and "to *teach* them that knew them not," and "whosoever will not do the law of thy God, let him be punished." The existence of a law of some kind is here referred to; and the specific requirements of it mentioned in the next chapter are all found in the book of the law of Moses, the Pentateuch. Ezra is not spoken of as making any laws, but of observing laws already in existence; and all these laws are in the Pentateuch.

He finds the people transgressing many of the "commandments" of God, for which he most fervently invokes pardon of the Lord. He then exhorts the people to put away their heathen wives whom they had taken "contrary to the commandment of God," and "let it be done *according to the law*," which law is found in Deut. vii., 3.

At this point, Ezra disappears from the history for about thirteen years; and the return and acts of Nehemiah fill the first seven chapters of the Book of Nehemiah. It should be observed that no law is spoken of, but the "commandments and the statutes, and the judgments *which the Lord commanded his servant Moses*." No reference is made to Ezra or any law of Ezra; and the history is occupied with an account of the repairs made in the walls of Jerusalem, and the opposition that was made to the work. And, when the walls were finished, Nehemiah "found a register of the genealogy of them which came up

at the first with Zerubbabel," which is inserted in the history. But up to this date there is no hint that Ezra *gave* any laws or *amended* the old ones "*written in the book of Moses.*"

But now, when the walls are finished, and in the seventh month the feast of Tabernacles was come, "the people ask Ezra, the scribe, who again appears in the history, to bring the *book of the law of Moses,*" which the Lord had commanded Israel (undoubtedly, the same book used at the dedication of the new temple, about eighty years before. Ezra vi., 18); "and Ezra brought the law . . . and he read therein . . . from morning until midday before the men and the women and those that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law, and Ezra, the scribe, stood upon a pulpit of wood, and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, . . . and, when he opened it, all the people stood up, and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, amen, with lifting up of hands."

Ezra, however, was not the only interpreter of the law. He had help in reading, and thirteen persons are named as assisting him, "and also the Levites, to cause the people to understand the law . . . So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah and Ezra, the priest, the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God. And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites unto Ezra, the scribe, that they *might instruct in the words of the law.* And they found written in the *law which the Lord had commanded by Moses* that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month, and that proclamation should be made in all their cities to bring branches of trees to make booths *as it is written*" (Lev. xxiii., 40). "And, day by day, he read in the *book of the law of God* from the first day to the last day, and they kept the feast according to the manner" (Lev. xxiii., 36), or as the custom was.

Now was the time and this the place, if ever, for Ezra or the historian to reveal that Ezra was the author of this law, called the *law of God by Moses*; and that this "*book of the law,*" called "*the book of the law of Moses,*" was the book of a law given by Ezra; that Ezra, the chief reader of the law, was the maker of the law; that Moses made no laws, and that all accounts and traditions to that effect were idle tales. But no such claim is made by Ezra, or his historian, on an occasion of greatest interest to the people. Nay, he and his historian

attribute the authorship of this book and these laws to Moses, and to him only and always. There is no discrepancy in the testimony, both when the historian speaks and when Ezra speaks. There is a collusion, or both speak the truth. A choice must be made between these alternatives. There is no other conclusion to be reached. Here is a most barefaced falsehood, or Moses wrote or caused to be written these laws which were read, unless further on in the history the riddle is explained and the deception justified.

A brief examination, therefore, of what remains of the history of this period, must now be made.

About fifteen days after the reading of *the law which the Lord had commanded Moses*, as just narrated, the people assembled again, "and they" (the scribes named before) "stood up in their place, and read in *the book of the law* of the Lord their God; and the Levites stood upon the stairs, and cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God, saying, . . . Thou camest down upon *Mount Sinai* and spakest with the people, and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them *precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses*, thy servant. . . . Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against thee, and cast *thy law* behind their backs. . . . Therefore, thou deliverdest them into the hand of their enemies, . . . that thou mightest bring them again unto *thy law*." Can it be doubted that the law here spoken is the same as that previously mentioned as being read and "*written in the book of the law of Moses?*" And, further on, we read that "the people, separating themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, . . . enter into a curse and into an oath to walk in God's law, *which was given by Moses*, the servant of God."

No hint is given as yet that the "law" which was read, and disobedience to which was the cause of the captivity, was in any sense or any degree the work of Ezra or his companions; but it is said to *have been given at Sinai by the hand of Moses*.

When the ceremony of consecrating the new walls and the temple was performed, "they read *in the book of Moses*, in the audience of the people," the passage respecting "the Ammonite and Moabite," to be found in Deut. xxiii., 3, 4; "and, when they heard the law, they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude."

Such is the testimony of Ezra and Nehemiah and their historian respecting the author of the "law," of which so much is said in these Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is everywhere attributed to Moses when its author is spoken of, and is said to have been given in or at Mount Sinai. No hint, direct or indirect, is anywhere given in all this

history that Ezra had anything to do either with writing, arranging, or revising these laws, or collecting scattered statutes in a book, called *a* book, or *the* book, of the law given by Moses.

Such is the teaching of history, whether reliable or unreliable, respecting the relation of Ezra, the scribe, to the Pentateuch. He was one of many readers and interpreters of it, and nothing more. He did not write it, he did not revise it, he did not re-arrange it. Not a line of historic evidence is found sustaining any such assumption. The traditions to that effect are modern and grotesque, bizarre, miraculous, and incredible.

If we cling to the results which true historical criticism reaches, the hypothesis, so often announced as an incontrovertible fact, is as unsubstantial as the "baseless fabric of a vision," and should disappear forever from the pages of all sound criticism.

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## AN EXEGESIS OF THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

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There is perhaps no portion of Scripture so familiar to the common reader as this Psalm—and yet there is none to which he turns more frequently, nor in which he finds more that is encouraging, helpful, and fresh. With the careful student this is yet more emphatically true. To him each new examination reveals additional phases of simple yet sublime sentiment, and of chaste yet elegant expression, such as are quite inexhaustible.

In a critical examination of the piece, we naturally begin by considering its claim to a place in the canon of Scripture. In what does this claim consist? We find, in the first place that its inscription is **מִזְמֹר לְדָוִד**, which the best authorities translate a Psalm of David. As far, then, as the inscription bears any certainty of being correct, it points to a Davidic origin for the Psalm. Allowing David to be an inspired author, this points to a just claim for the canonicity of the production. With this agrees the internal structure of the writing itself; its sentiments and forms of expression being such as are known to be characteristic of the great Psalmist. To this, again, may be added the fact that the general agreement of critics has admitted the genuineness of the Psalm, in accordance with the traditionary testimony. Some would find references to this Psalm in such passages of the New Testament as John X., 14, where the "good shepherd" is speaking, or in John VIII., 35, where the Son is said to abide in the house forever. Possibly the occurrence of the same words here may be merely accidental. Otherwise, we may consider our Lord's reference to or quotation from the Psalm to be a sanction of its truth and authority.

It will thus be seen that while any direct proof of the canonicity of this Psalm may be wanting, yet the circumstantial proof in its favor is both weighty and cumulative.